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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 001361

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STATE FOR NEA AND NEA/ARPI
PARIS FOR ZEYA; LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [XF](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMANI EXPECTATIONS FOR ARAB LEAGUE MINISTERIAL

REF: A. SECSTATE 163365

[1B](#). SECSTATE 159137

[1C](#). SECSTATE 162250

[1D](#). MUSCAT 1355

[1E](#). MUSCAT 1345

Classified By: DCM William R. Stewart.

Reasons: 1.4 (b, d).

Summary

[11](#). (C) The Omani Ministry of Foreign Affairs expects Arab League praise for the Gaza withdrawal and Iraq's constitutional process, and a firm denunciation of terrorism.

The League will likely push for further implementation of the Roadmap, and informally pressure Syria to improve its cooperation with Lebanon, Iraq and the UN. The MFA does not believe the Israeli Magen David Adom issue is on the agenda, though the fallout from Hurricane Katrina could potentially shift that debate. The time is not yet ripe either to reopen the Israeli trade mission or put Omani diplomats in Baghdad, but both events are "only a matter of time." End summary.

[12](#). (U) In the absence of the Foreign Minister and MFA Arab Affairs Department Chief, Pol/Econ Chief delivered ref A-C demarches on September 7 to acting Arab Affairs Chief Salem al-Rawahi and Arab League Affairs officer Khalid al-Zaidi, who offered substantive responses to the subjects below. Al-Rawahi noted that FM Yusuf bin Alawi had met with his GCC FM colleagues on September 6, and would attend the Arab League ministerial in Cairo on September 8. He undertook to share our demarche points and non-papers with the Minister's party in Cairo.

Iraq

[13](#). (C) Al-Rawahi said that the AL Ministerial agenda currently stood at 22 separate items, with terrorism, Iraq, and Israel/Palestine topping a list that also includes a number of social and economic issues. He expects the AL to strongly endorse Iraq's constitutional referendum and to call on all Iraqis to take part in the peaceful political process.

He noted that the Arab League was likewise giving serious consideration to opening an office in Baghdad. P/E Chief underscored the need for greater effort by AL states in stanching the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq. On Omani-Iraqi ties, al-Rawahi said the Ministry has an excellent working relationship with the Iraqi Ambassador and embassy staff in Muscat, and would welcome any Iraqi government visitors. He lamented, however, that the security situation in Iraq was not yet conducive for staffing the Omani Embassy in Baghdad, which had been damaged in an attack earlier this year. Rawahi acknowledged USG efforts to promote stability and security in Iraq, but raised concern over growing allegations in the Arab media that Iraq's territorial integrity was in question. He called for greater USG and Iraqi public diplomacy to reassure the region that Iraq would not be split into a number of mini-states.

Israel/Palestine

[14](#). (C) Predicting that the AL would voice strong support for the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, al-Rawahi said there was firm consensus on the need for further progress in implementing the Roadmap. He understood that France and Russia may also be ready to launch new initiatives in the peace process (NFI). In light of the success of the Gaza withdrawal, P/E Chief noted that it brought into further relief the Palestinian Authority's urgent need for additional support as it seeks to extend its governing authority, including security, into the Gaza Strip. Highlighting the USG's FY2005 assistance to the PA, he urged that the AL not neglect the fact that the Gaza withdrawal makes further support to the PA all the more important. Al-Rawahi acknowledged the suggestion that Oman consider reopening the Israeli Trade Office closed in 2000, saying he is personally

in favor but that he could not predict how soon Oman might deem the timing appropriate. He stressed that Oman continues to engage in periodic dialogue with the Israeli government.

Magen David Adom

15. (C) Echoing ref D comments by MFA International Organizations Department Chief Ambassador Talib al-Raisi, al-Rawahi said he did not believe the MDA issue was on the AL Ministerial's agenda, though he said the AL Secretary General could always choose to add it to the list on his own authority. He thought that the AL had previously decided that consideration of MDA's case should be deferred into the future. P/E Chief pointed out the magnitude of humanitarian relief operations following Hurricane Katrina, the Asian Tsunami and other disasters made it plain that, in times of

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need, no source of assistance should be rejected. In light of the U.S. disaster, and the September 12-13 consultations in Geneva, P/E Chief underscored that the Cairo Ministerial offered the best opportunity for AL ministers to signal their delegations in Geneva to finally resolve this long-overdue matter. Rawahi agreed that Hurricane Katrina might further sway Arab thinking on MDA.

Syria

16. (C) Responding to our talking points (refs A and B), al-Rawahi confirmed ref D indications that Oman has no plans for any high-level bilaterals with the Syrian delegation to the UN Summit. He said the Syrians were certain to come under fire in the AL for misdeeds that have come to UN Security Council attention. He asked, however, if the USG saw no positive steps by the Syrian government or any merit in maintaining a dialogue with Damascus. P/E Chief said that Syria's limited steps only put into starker relief how much more it should be doing to halt the flood of combatants, weapons, and smuggled goods pouring across its frontier with Iraq. It also contrasted starkly with how effectively Syria manages to seal its borders with Lebanon whenever it seeks to pressure Beirut. Until Syria took concrete steps to fulfill its international obligations and respect its neighbors, there was little likelihood of high-level USG dialogue with Damascus.

Terrorism, Reform

17. (C) Al-Rawahi expected a strong denunciation of terrorism from the AL Ministerial. P/E Chief underscored the USG's hope that the ministers could also provide further momentum at the UNGA for achieving agreement on the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Regarding political reform, al-Rawahi noted Oman's attendance at the previous Forums for the Future and assured that a delegation would likewise attend the November event in Bahrain. He said the Ministry had recently received an invitation from the Bahraini government, and that the Minister would decide on the composition of Oman's delegation after his return.

BALTIMORE